

LESSON 7

DISBELIEF IN GOD

Scripture Texts: *Job 9:16; Job 21:14; Psalm 14:1; 2 Corinthians 6:15; 1 Timothy 5:8*

In this lesson we will take a good look at several types of unbelief. Some of these are old while others have taken a newer form. The Church of God is faced at times by all of these in some form. In past years men who expressed disbelief in God were shunned as though they were dangerous characters. As freedom of thought and expression has come to be recognized more in our society, one can now express his scepticism without sacrificing his social position.

The right to express one's opinion should not be denied, and yet such right does not increase the value of the opinion itself. If the beliefs or unbeliefs of the infidels were at one time false and dangerous, no amount of respectability can change their true nature. Truth is eternal, and it seems that error, too, is quite enduring.

The contest between divine truth and error is not so apparent today because many of the contentions of the infidels in former days are now freely made by professed Christians. The battleground has been transferred to the nominal church.

MEMORY VERSE: *And even as they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, God gave them over to a reprobate mind, to do those things which are not convenient.*

Romans 1:28

Infidels, Atheists, and Agnostics

It has been questioned at times that there really are infidels. These statements by Paul assume that there are in 2 Corinthians 6:15 and 1 Timothy 5:8. If one denies the inspiration of the Bible and the deity of Christ, he is regarded as an infidel though he may not be an atheist.

An atheist declares flatly, "There is no God." All others believe in some kind of God. The atheist denies the existence of God. He strikes at the foundation of all religion and denies all that religion stands for. His view, if accepted, would leave man with no one higher than himself to whom he can look for help. He is a forlorn creature.

What can be more absurd than an unbelief that refuses to admit evidence that cannot be disputed, as in Job 9:16? And yet it is a common thing with unbelievers to reject such evidence as is opposed to their theories. Unbelief does not require a great amount of intelligence; even a fool can deny God as we read in Psalm 14:1. In that case the conclusion is clearly the result of desire and not of logic. Unbelief comes from the heart. With the heart, man believes unto righteousness, and with the heart, man denies to his own condemnation.

The agnostic seeks to escape responsibility by pleading ignorance. He does not know whether there is a God or not. He thinks it impossible to know, and he is glad he does not know, for he thinks his ignorance excuses

him. He doubts very much that anyone else knows.

Love, hope, and sorrow cannot be measured or analyzed by science, but who will say that they are not real? If the agnostic would attempt to find out about God, he would soon know that God exists. One man declares honey is not sweet; another man says he does not think it is either, but he does not know. Neither man is benefitted by the honey because neither eats it. If they would taste it, they would know. Only the man who shuts his spiritual eyes can find no trace of God. Psalm 34:8 says, "O taste and see that the Lord is good."

None of these people have ever experienced the joy of sin pardoned and fellowship with God. They try to live as though they were not a man but only a beast without moral distinctions.

Materialism

Materialism teaches that matter is the only real substance and that all mental and spiritual states are the effects of physical causes. The materialist believes that there was a time when only unorganized matter existed. Then there began a process of development that resulted in our orderly universe. No explanation is offered as to what caused the process or why it began at that time except that God had nothing to do with it. He teaches that man's actions are the results of brain and nerve stimulation and can be attributed only to his environment. All his moral attitudes and beliefs are products of outside causes, and for this reason, he is entirely free from responsibility. They deny the existence of all spiritual forces; thus they deny the existence of God.

Humanism

Quite akin to materialism is the doctrine of humanism. An element of humanitarianism pervades humanism and gives it a flavor that makes it more acceptable. But beneath all this there is an opposing element that poisons the whole system.

It values man for himself as a personality, the highest form of a living being, made to rule and to enjoy life. It exalts man to the place of possessing within himself every power necessary to his highest development. He can lift himself by his own bootstraps to the full achievement of his dignity and power. He needs no outside help and looks for none.

In humanism man has taken the place of God, and hence man is left with no one but himself to worship and with no moral law other than his own ideals. Humanism may be a refined paganism, but it is not Christianity.

JUST A THOUGHT

"The right train of thought can take you to a better station in life."